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Dennis G. Rice
Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement
Docket Number RIN 1029-AC04, Administrative Record
Room 252 SIB
1951 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington DC 20240.

RE: Docket Number RIN 1029-AC04—DO NOT WEAKEN Stream Buffer Zone Rule

Dear Mr. Rice,

As a concerned American, I very strongly oppose any attempt to weaken, change, or eliminate the stream buffer zone rule that has protected streams from coal mining activities for nearly 25 years.

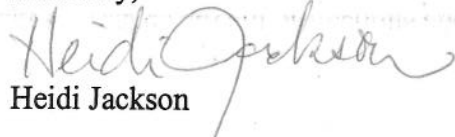
The buffer zone rule is an important protection for coal mining regions that prohibits coal-mining activities from disrupting areas within 100 feet of streams unless those activities in no way impact water quality or quantity. The changes to this rule proposed by the Bush administration would eliminate these important protections for streams and allow mountaintop removal coal mining companies to further bury, destroy and degrade waters in the Appalachian region with their wastes.

The Bush administration should withdraw this attempt to weaken stream protections and, instead, leave the existing stream buffer zone rule in place. While it claimed to examine the environmental impacts of changing this rule, the agency did not even study the benefits to streams of enforcing the law as written. That failure by itself makes the environmental study useless.

According to the administration's earlier studies on mountaintop removal coal mining, the immediate and long-term environmental impacts of this form of coal mining are severe and irreversible. Lapses in the enforcement of the buffer zone rule (as well as the Clean Water Act) have allowed almost 2,000 miles of streams to be buried or degraded by mining waste.

The administration should not go forward with any rulemaking that would weaken existing laws like the buffer zone rule that protect our vital natural resources from mountaintop removal coal mining. Instead, it should rely on sound science and enforce the rules as they are currently written, as this is the best way to safeguard streams from the destructive effects of mountaintop removal mining. I will join millions of Americans in continuing to follow this matter very closely.

Sincerely,


Heidi Jackson

11/9/07